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ABSTRACT

This book recounts the Phoenix Indian School's history from 1935 to its closing in 1990. In the 1930s, the Bureau of Indian Affairs' philosophy of assimilation declined in importance, as evidenced by termination of the boarding school's militaristic discipline, greater recognition of tribal traditions, and early experimentation in bilingual education. Various programs that served both the school and the larger Indian population in Arizona are described, including the Phoenix Indian School Band; the outing system; the library bus; extension education in Indian communities; diesel school and telephone and radio school; and the school print shop, which assisted in developing primers designed to teach Navajo children how to read their own language. The Special Navajo Program, a 5-year course to bring illiterate Navajos up to an eighth-grade level, was successful largely because of bilingual teaching teams. After World War II there was talk of closing the school, but Indian veterans' requests to keep it open prevailed. Factors that led to the school's demise in 1990 included teachers and administration moving off campus, which ended the tradition of intimate contact with students; the changing nature of the student body; reduced emphasis on vocational training; a new sense of Indian identity and empowerment among the students; federal budget cuts; and increasing pressure to use the property for Phoenix development. Appendices include the service record of the "Bushmasters," an all-Indian segment of the Arizona National Guard; the student "Hall of Fame"; samples of early printing in the Navajo language; student poetry; and school site plans, 1916-88. Contains 19 references, chapter notes, and photographs. (TD)

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